Your Holiness Pope John Paul II,
Vatican City.

CDPM
DOCUMENTAÇÃO

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Your Holiness,

I am writing to inform you that I will begin an indefinite fast, taking only water and salt, from midnight on the 1st October '89. The fast is to protest at your failure to unequivocally condemn Indonesia's brutal colonial invasion, occupation and illegal annexation of East Timor, and its barbaric human rights violations, and also to protest at international support and arms sales to Indonesia, in particular by successive British governments.

The Indonesians have tortured, raped, 'disappeared' and massacred huge numbers of Timorese; during their invasion and subsequent occupation they have caused the death of some 200,000, about a third of the less than 700,000 population of East Timor before the invasion (some figures are even higher, ranging as high as 330,000; the true figures will never be known). Indonesian use of massive bombing, shelling and defoliation, combined with crop-burning and cattle slaughter (the following figures show the drop in numbers from 1973 to 1983: Buffaloes 141,006 to 26,183; Beef cattle 82,473 to 29,157; Horses 139,490 to 13,000; and Pigs 304,565 to 88,620) caused a terrible famine between '77 and '80 (the Indonesians at first denied their was any famine), and drove tens of thousands of Timorese from the mountainous interior to become prisoners of the Indonesians; those that weren't killed were herded into 'protected villages' (concentration camps). In these camps they were also starving; Frank Carlin, of the US Catholic Relief Services, described the situation as "greater (starvation) than anything I have seen in fourteen years of relief work in Asia", whilst David Delaprez, head of the ICRC relief operation, said it was "as bad as Biafra and potentially as serious as Kampuchea". In September '78 a group of diplomats and newsmen who visited Remexio were convinced that a major international relief effort was necessary. Yet it was another 13 months before the military authorities allowed a relief programme to begin; not until the encirclement and annihilation campaign had been completed (this campaign was in itself an abomination; disregarding all ethical and moral conventions, the Indonesians mobilised virtually all the boys and men from the ages of 15 to 50 (with some cases of boys as young as nine, and men as old as sixty) who were in their areas of control, and forced them to march in groups in front of the Indonesian soldiers, in a 'fence of legs' (much as African beaters are used to hunt wild animals). Apart from other considerations, this massively aggravated the famine situation, as the 'mobilised' males could not plant or tend their gardens.

Timorese deaths from starvation must have been looked upon as a godsend by the Indonesians, saving their precious bullets. Their attitude to the Timorese can be gleaned from occasional unguarded outbursts, such as:

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"50,000 or perhaps 80,000 might have been killed in East Timor...It was war...Then what is the big fuss?...We have all sinned" (Foreign Minister Adam Malik, 1st April '77); or "We Indonesian soldiers do not need Timorese. We already have a lot of people. We just want the island of Timor. We deal with the Timorese as we deal with pigs; we slaughter them with pleasure whenever possible" (Colonel Sobroto, head of the District Military HQ, to Andre Faria, a Timorese, who was arrested, tortured, and later escaped some time in '84/'85, in the Dili area).

Following are some testimonies from Timor:

"The people live in an atmosphere of terror, day and night, arbitrary imprisonment, fear, forbidden to speak of certain matters, forbidden to listen to foreign broadcasts, living in a concentration camp style of housing. All of this makes life for the people very difficult. That is the reality today in East Timor" (priest in E. Timor, Christmas '82);

"On 15th May in the town of Laleia, an Indonesian soldier was seen openly kicking a head in the street. It seemed to be a boy's. All the people witnessed this in silence without saying a word or showing any reaction. Fear forces the people to hide their strongest feelings of revulsion" (priest in E. Timor, '84);

"The greatest suffering now is that the people are confined to their villages, have nothing to eat, are ill-treated, tortured, detained, raped, killed....Illness and hunger are also carrying out their policy of exterminating the population" (priest in E.T., July '84)

"...Such has happened in Lospalos, Viqueque, Ainaro and Jumalai where young children are burnt in a fire and grabbed from their parents to be cut up like animals before their parent's eyes. And orphaned children are taken away at knife point. The military, perhaps because of the anger in their hearts, do not seem to have a sense of humanity in them. ... In this situation which is new to the people of this small island, it happens that parents are threatened with guns that there will be great hardships for the whole family unless they surrender their young school-aged daughters to be raped....

One action that now critically threatens the people of Timor, both in the city and in the mountains, is the problem of the present military operation. For now they are taking boys and men aged 12 to 50 to join in the fighting - marched off into the forests without any weapons. In addition, they have to move ahead of the battle front with the military behind them:..." (statement by seminary students to visiting President of the Indonesian Episcopal Conference, Timor January '84);

"In Muapitini (Lospalos) and Iliomar there were 'public judgements',(Bishop's italics) this means people implicated for having contacts with the mountain areas were killed in front of the other inhabitants by knife, cutlass and by beating with sticks and by their own family members...and the bapak (Indonesian) laughs with contentment, rubs his hands together and says that it is not his fault...It is a macabre situation that we are living. This is more or less a pale image of what we are going through. I ask you, Monsignor, to continue to pray for us and to launch an appeal to the free world to open its eyes to the barbarities of which the Indonesians are capable. The Church is being persecuted and

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accused and our schools are being searched and the students interrogated..." (letter from Mgr. (now Bishop) Belo to Mgr. da Costa Lopes, February '84).

In September '81, a massacre occurred at Lacluta; 20 trucks were required to take away the bodies. Below is an eye-witness account of part of the massacre:

"Indonesian soldiers took hold of the legs of small children and threw them into the air a number of times and smashed their heads against rocks. There was a woman who asked that one of the children be given to her after the mother had been killed. At that time, a soldier permitted the woman to take this small child, but a few minutes later he grabbed the child and killed him. The poor woman who asked for the child was not so wise, because she too was then killed. There was one other who asked for one of the children to be given to her...the army person did not want to hear her pleading and in front of everyone destroyed the body of this small child who had done no wrong. Then the soldier opened his mouth, showing his teeth with a smile, and said a sentence which we consider to be part of the wisdom of Java. He said "When you clean your field, don't you kill all the snakes, the large and the small alike?"

(eye-witness report from a woman named Gusmao, now living in Australia).

Though I have quoted a statement by a CRS member, Frank Carlin, other members were not so honest. Many people considered the CRS programs of the late '70's highly questionable; their projects mirrored US Foreign Policy, and led to support for regimes such as Pinochet's Chile, Peru, and Indonesia. In 1978, of a budget of $257 million, about $179 million was provided by the US Government.

When a party of officials, including a western reporter, visited Uatolari by helicopter in May '82, the reporter thought the children looked severely malnourished, with the classic signs of distended bellies and stick-like limbs; but Hans Meier-Eybers, the Swiss project director for a Catholic Relief Services agricultural project (a $5 million US-funded program) thought otherwise. "They look like healthy kids to me. Sure, they're a little dirty, that's all". An Indonesian doctor, S.C. Kurniati, approached and was asked if he thought the children appeared to be malnourished. "You can see for yourself," he said, seeming taken aback by the question. "These children are all malnourished". (Philadelphia Enquirer, 28 May '82).

Much of the preceding information you will probably be aware of, through direct contact with Mgr. da Costa Lopes and Bishop Belo, amongst others. But I suspect that much of the information you receive may be heavily edited or distorted, if it has to come through sources such as the Indonesian Frans Seda (of your Commission on Justice and Peace) who seems to me an apologist and defender of Indonesian colonial aggression and genocide, or through Cardinal Canalini, your Apostolic Nuncio in Jakarta, who suggested that Bishop Belo's letter to the UN Secretary General did not reflect the aspirations of either the Church or the Timorese people; and who also refused sanctuary to six Timorese students seeking refuge in the Vatican Embassy, after two of their colleagues had been arrested and another 'disappeared'.

I am of course aware that you made your concern about Timor known to the Indonesian

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Ambassador to the Vatican on his presenting his credentials in December '87; as also you did with his predecessor in '84. But although welcome, your comments were too diplomatic and totally inadequate in view of the heinous crimes committed by the Indonesians, crimes which include the only three deemed tryable at the Nurenberg Trials after WWII: "Crimes Against Peace","War Crimes" and "Crimes Against Humanity".

Pope Pius XII failed to publicly condemn the Nazi death-camp exterminations, though he knew perfectly well what was going on. Similarly, you and Pope Paul VI have failed to publicly condemn the invasion, occupation and annexation of East Timor, and Indonesia's genocidal and ethnocidal treatment of the Timorese.

You have recently condemned in no uncertain terms Syrian bombardment and genocide in Lebanon. Virtually everything you say about that conflict could have been said about Timor; although many more people have died, and from a much smaller population, Timor has not caught the headlines; no nightly news bulletins, or Western government denunciations. Perhaps this is because Indonesia is seen as a virulently anti-communist 'ally', whilst Syria is seen as an 'enemy'. And Western complicity, including supplying the arms for Indonesia's aggressive war, is massive and undeniable, whereas the dastardly Soviets back the Syrians. If you denounce the Indonesian occupation with as strong language, in your forthcoming visit, your words will not be greeted by Western governemnts and media, all too aware of their complicity. But for the sake of the Timorese, I sincerely hope you do. I believe it is your duty to give support and succour to these betrayed people; and to back to the hilt the brave initiative of your Administrator in Dili, Bishop Belo, in his appeal to the UN and to the International family of nations.

Although your intervention would not move the Indonesians, it could powerfully influence public and governmental attitudes in the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, who together with Japan fund Indonesia's tottering economy with massive infusions of aid every year. The West has ample leverage to influence Indonesia; they just lack the will and incentive. Strategic interests and mountains of multi-national spoils lead them to sacrifice the Timorese to the Indonesians.

In addition to Indonesian crimes in Timor, West Papua and the killing of up to a million Indonesians in the aftermath of the '65 coup attempt (which if Suharto himself didn't plan, he was almost certainly aware of before it occurred), Suharto has confessed in his recent autobiography that the government forces were indeed responsible for the "mysterious killings" of '83 (some 5-10,000 suspected criminals were shot or knifed to death by government death squads). It is a measure of Suharto's brazeness, and his confidence (proved correct) that the West couldn't care less how many people he orders to be murdered, that he should admit his guilt. Yet the world still treats with him as a normal head of state, rather than a murderous thug to be imprisoned or shunned. And Murdani, a Catholic and one of the main architects of the Timor invasion, admitted that he 'lied and lied' (about army complicity in the 'mysterious killings') and complained that now Suharto had admitted all.

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As a Christian (I was brought up a Catholic) I believe Christ's words, that the devil is the Prince of this world; that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world; that He is the Way, and if any wish to follow Him, they must take up their cross and follow Him. I do not expect the Timorese to get justice, any more than I expect the Kurds, Armenians, Aborigines or American Indians to get justice; justice is an alien concept to this world and it's leaders. But as a Christian, I feel impelled to do my utmost for these poor, betrayed, traumatised people of Timor. Their just aspirations go unheeded by hypocritical politicians and diplomats, that bleat on about human rights and self-determination when it suits them, and ignore the most hideous crimes and abuses when they perceive some benefit to themselves in so doing.

I have written literally hundreds of letters about the Timor situation, and had printed and distributed thousands of information tracts, all to little avail. I hope my fast will be more effective.

Yours respectfully,

Paul Barbara.

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